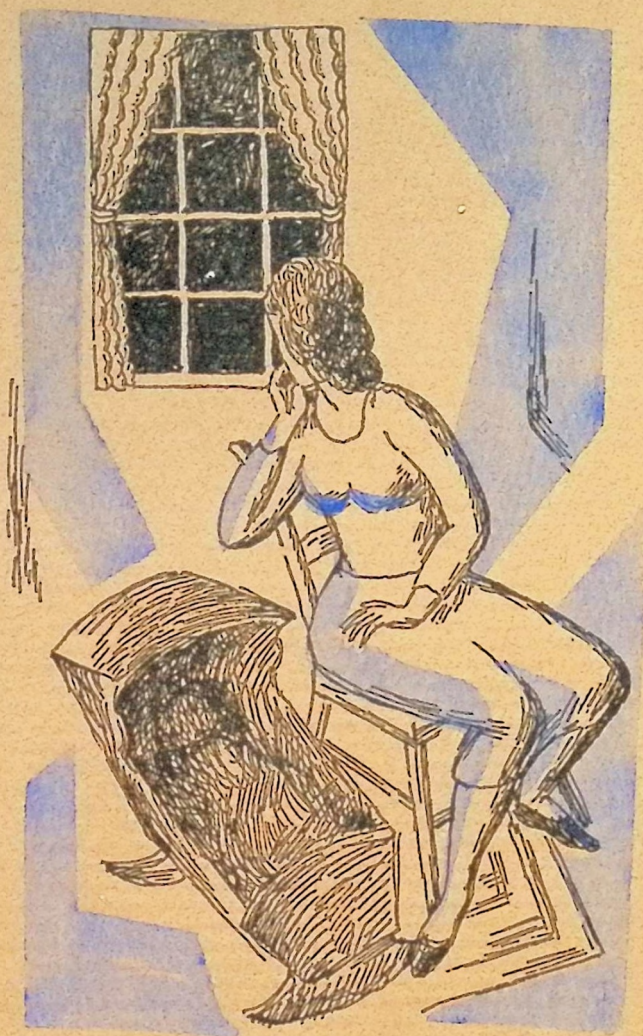


MONOLOGUE FOR MOTHERS

(*ASIDE*)

BY GENEVIEVE TAGGARD



The Poetry Quartos, Random House, New York, 1929

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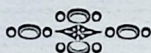
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Monologue for Mothers (*ASIDE*)



I am a coward now, and never shall
I walk the earth in confidence again.
And I have let death know I am afraid
At this late date.

His steps come at my back
As viewlessly as feet track someone with
The fortune of a nation, - - - just behind. . .
Halts when I halt, and picks me up again.

(A hinge, just a rusty hinge,
Nothing to ague at,
Still, how I scuttle and cringe!
What was that.)

The coarse stuff of myself folded no longer
Around the small pure person, the new child; I tremble,
I am afraid, I have found
How slender the shoulders, the rare bones, and how fine
The little deep-blue veins that show along
The temple bone. The world is evil. Greedy air
Sucking too near could sip her inward breath, - - - I go
So timidly now, who had so many prides.
Who scorned the craven wings across the nest,
The squalking warning of the parent bird,
Neck stretched far out, peering and peering still,
East, West, North, South for infant enemies.

Come, crane your neck, an instinct says;
Perhaps the great sky holds a hawk! a hawk!
If eagles come, combat them with your eyes.
Hold off a reptile with one mother-gaze.

(Beauty writhing in the snake,
Alert in the bad eye
Of the great hawk, good Beauty make
Cause with this child. I cry:

Beauty, be her swords to cut
Enemies away,
Build a circle-wall to shut
Night out and shut in day.)

I will not live in fear, in petty fear,
Nor shelter with an arm
Angled in terror; shock her innocent ear
With this insane alarm.

Now all the world will nod to her,
Nothing ever snatch
At her in evil - - -

Something flew
Slant on the window! It is nothing, child.
Better to die than always always hear
Mimicking death approach in every tick
Clocks make. A hinge must creak.

Click-click.

That was the gate. The same tread comes, is here, heavy
The unswerving step. Lock, lock and straight:
The door. (A lock, a double lock.)
Light, light the sodden wick - - -
Come here, my child, hush hush your little talk;
Be still; O do be quick.
A knock. Another knock.



The Poetry Quartos

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